

**TOWN OF BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING**

**ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE
VIA GO TO MEETING PLATFORM
BIG STONE GAP, VA**

June 1, 2021

6:30 PM

***As a result of the State of Emergency declared by Virginia Governor Ralph Northam on March 12, 2020 by Executive Order No. 51, by Wise County Virginia Executive Michael Hatfield on March 19, 2020 and by the Council of the Town of Big Stone Gap Virginia effective March 20, 2020, due to the public health emergency resulting from the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the public meeting scheduled for June 1, 2021 at 6:30 pm, is to be conducted electronically as authorized by Resolution 02-2021 adopted on April 13th, 2021.**

***This Electronic Meeting was conducted via the GO TO MEETING platform and was made available to Council Members, Town Staff, and the public by conference call**

AGENDA ITEM 1

Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order.

Those Present: Hon. Gary Johnson, Mayor
Hon. Nancy Bailey, Vice-Mayor
Hon. Robert Bloomer, Councilman
Hon. Kent Gilley, Councilman
Hon. Tyler Hughes, Councilman
Hon. Crystal Lyke, Councilwoman
Hon. Aaron McKinney, Councilman

Staff Present: Mr. Stephen Lawson, Town Manager
Ms. Amanda Hawkins, Town Clerk/Treasurer
Mr. Charles Bledsoe, Town Attorney
Mr. Steve Hamm, Chief of Police

AGENDA ITEM 2

PUBLIC HEARING – FY2021-22 Proposed Budget

Mayor Johnson recessed the Council Workshop and opened the Public Hearing. He called for comments from citizens. Hearing no comments, Mayor Johnson closed the Public Hearing and reconvened the Council Workshop.

AGENDA ITEM 3

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Review of draft of minutes of the Council Workshop (Electronic Attendance) of May 4, 2021, the Regular Council Meeting (Electronic Attendance) of May 21, 2021, and the Special Council Meeting (electronic Attendance) of May 21, 2021.

No comments.

AGENDA ITEM 4**PRO ART ASSOCIATION – Michael McNulty**

Ms. Hawkins introduced Michael McNulty who is the current Director of the local Pro-Art Association.

Mr. McNulty said the Association is trying to find new ways to get art out into the community to help people realize art is not just in academic settings but is everywhere. He said they would like to bring visual artist Heather Harvey to Big Stone Gap to sculpt an art installation piece called “Earthsplash” on the Greenbelt and to use that medium to engage the public in a surprising and playful way.

He said they have pinpointed a tentative location but the artist wants to make the final decision when she comes to visit Big Stone Gap and walks the Greenbelt. He said the timeline will be pretty quick – maybe four to five days. The idea is essentially to create a sculpture similar to a rock splashing into water but to make the piece from the surrounding environment with the center portion made from fiberglass that will be covered and planted with grass. In the event the grass doesn’t grow as well as planned, the fiberglass piece would be painted in a trompe-l’œil method that would look like it was covered in grass so it will still blend into the environment. He said that since the art project will be made mostly of environmental elements, it could remain and weather naturally until it needed to be removed, which would be a simple matter of removing the center piece and landscaping over the space.

Mayor Johnson said it sounds like a good project and will add to our Greenbelt.

Mrs. Bailey asked if there would be any cost to the Town and would any water be needed. Mr. McNulty said there would be no cost to the Town. As to water, he said if the Town wanted to assist with watering the sculpture that would be great but he plans to ask local students to join in the maintenance of the project. Mr. Lawson said he thinks getting local students involved would be great and the Town could step in and assist when needed.

Mr. Hughes said he is a big proponent of public art and has checked out this artist’s website. He said he is looking forward to seeing what she can do for our Town.

Mr. Lawson said he loves art in the community and wants the Town to be a leader in this area. He noted we have used local high school students in local art projects in Town before and he hopes this will not be the last project planned for Big Stone Gap. Mr. McNulty commented that the majority of the population of Wise County resides in Big Stone Gap so it makes perfect sense to start this project here. Mr. Lawson added that when you consider the outlying areas that are not within Town limits but are considered to be Big Stone Gap that margin greatly increases.

Mr. McNulty said he would love to have art pieces all along the Greenbelt to interact with. He also suggested a community Christmas Carol event along the Greenbelt during the Holiday Season. Mr. Lawson welcomed that idea.

AGENDA ITEM 5**TOWN ENGINEER’S REPORT****Greenbelt Phase IV**

Mr. Broskey said the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has approved the plans and specifications for Phase IV of the Greenbelt Project and we are still waiting on approval for the environmental portion of the project. Once we get that, he said we could possibly be able to advertise this project within the next month.

Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study

Mr. Broskey said the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) and the Asset Management Plan is almost complete and will be presented to Mr. Lawson by the end of the week for his approval.

System Wide Water Loss Project

Mr. Broskey said we have updated our plans in order to add more lines, some along the four-lane where we've had several leaks recently. Rural Development (RD) has approved the new alignments so we can move forward quickly.

Hiking Trails at Big Cherry

Mr. Broskey said he, Steve Lawson, and Gary Harris visited Big Cherry to identify the first section of hiking trails we hope to develop through a grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Recreational Trails Program. The grant application is due by the end of the month and will be an 80/20 match. He said they hope this will be the first of many trails to be developed on Big Cherry.

Mr. Broskey said that this year is The Lane Group's 25th Anniversary and they will host a cook-out this coming Thursday from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm. He invited everyone to come help them celebrate.

AGENDA ITEM 6

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a. Ordinance 07-2021 – FY2021-22 Budget

Mr. Lawson said he and Amanda Hawkins met with the Budget/Finance/Audit Committee and presented the proposed FY2021-22 Budget and will be asking for Council's approval for this ordinance to adopt the new budget at the Regular Council Meeting next week.

b. Resolution 08-2021 – Lenowisco Hazard Mitigation Plan

Mr. Lawson said this resolution is to support the Lenowisco Hazard Mitigation Plan which is an area-wide flood mitigation plan.

c. Proclamation – Mr. Automotive

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize a new auto body and automotive business in Town located next to O'Reilly's. He invited Council members to join him in a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, June 18th at noon. He said if everyone could arrive at 11:30 am they can get pictures done first and be free to enjoy the event.

d. Proclamation – National Garden Club Week

Mr. Lawson said this proclamation is to recognize the National Garden Club Week.

e. Parade Permit – July 4th

Mr. Lawson said this permit is for the annual 4th of July Parade to be held on Sunday, July 4th.

f. COVID-19 & Projects Update

Mr. Lawson said he is excited to have the opportunity to apply for a grant for hiking trails on Big Cherry. He said one of the first trails will connect to the Devil's Fork Loop and he hopes to be able to install some yurts along the trail.

He said Kids Fishing Day was very successful with a lot of activity on Big Cherry and Downtown as well. The Big Stone Gap General Store and Café had live music in the street all day. He noted that our first Block Party will be this Friday and will coincide with a Car Show that will require a couple of street closings – East 5th St to East 2nd St and a few side streets. He said we will have signs up 24 hours in advance to move vehicles so we can clear the streets.

Mr. Lawson said a boys baseball tournament will be held on Saturday and a girls softball tournament on Sunday at Bullitt Park. He said once Little League games end for the season we can let travel ball teams practice during the week and play their games on the weekends.

He talked about the water leaks on the four-lane on Rt. 23 South that Mr. Broskey mentioned earlier. He said the water pipes in that location are thin and were once thought to be a great new idea but have turned out to wear quicker than current PVC pipe, so we are adding that area to our plans for line replacement. Mr. Broskey noted that the pipe in that area is 1st generation PVC pipe and has been improved on over the years so the pipe we use currently is a much better grade.

**AGENDA ITEM 7
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION**

Ms. Lyke said she hopes Council members will be able to attend the Freedom Chevrolet Birthday Bash this Friday.

Mr. Hughes thanked the Town employees, especially Amanda Hawkins and all the folks who worked on the Town budget. He said he loves the idea of having public art around Town and wished the best for the upcoming Block Party.

Mr. Gilley thanked the Parks and Recreation crew for helping with the Kids Fishing Day. He said it was a great event.

Mr. Bloomer said he is excited about the walking trails at Big Cherry, and would like to see bicycle trails developed as well. He informed everyone that he and his wife Elise purchased the old dry cleaners building on Shawnee Avenue. He said Elise plans to open an ice cream/soup & sandwiches shop in the next several months.

Mrs. Bailey said it's great to see something done with the dry cleaners building. She said she missed out on all the activities in Town this past weekend while she attended her granddaughter's high school graduation in Ohio. She thanked all the Town employees for their hard work in making things happen. She asked where the Devil's Fork Loop is situated. Mr. Bloomer said the loop goes left along the creek from the Devil's Bathtub up to skirt around our property on High Knob and back around to the Devil's Bathtub. Mr. Lawson added that you can get on the loop on Century Road at the High Knob Tower on the Norton side and loop around the Devil's Bathtub and go back up to Century Road.

Mayor Johnson said the Kids Fishing Day was a blast – the trout was beautiful, there were plenty of gifts, and the weather was nice. He said Kent was the head chef and supplied plenty of World Famous S'mores and World Famous Hot Dogs. He said the Town employees do a great job.

**AGENDA ITEM 9
ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned 7:15 pm.

Minutes Recorded & Transcribed by
Amanda L. Hawkins – Town Clerk/Treasurer